

## ENGLAND TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF IRELAND'S INNOCENCE

Ken Early  
Sports Monday



Both boxers punched and dragged and willed themselves to raise what is an exceptional rivalry on to a higher plane  
Keith Duggan  
Sports Monday



WIN €10,000 WORTH OF KITCHEN APPLIANCES FROM NEFF

Double token: page 2

## FG branded 'McCreevy tribute act' over pledges on spending

Promises in election manifesto are carefully costed, Fine Gael insists

Opponents claim party trying to buy electorate with expensive promises

PAT LEAHY and HARRY MCGEE

Recent election promises from Fine Gael have been described as a "Charlie McCreevy and Brian Cowen tribute act", as political opponents accuse the party of seeking to buy the election with a series of expensive spending commitments.

Fine Gael insisted its promises were carefully costed in its election manifesto published yesterday but critics – including its Government partners Fianna Fáil – questioned a number of aspects of the document. Launching the Labour Party manifesto yesterday, the party's finance spokesman Ged Nash said that "Simon Harris's 'new energy' is starting to look like a Charlie McCreevy and Brian Cowen tribute act".

Mr Nash was responding to news that Fine Gael in its manifesto launched in Tipperary yesterday had promised to give €1,000 to every baby, placing the money in a savings account until they are 18 years old.

The Fine Gael manifesto also promised to cut taxes by €7 billion, part of a plan to increase spending by €52 billion between next year and 2030, including an extra €2.5 billion to pay for a €60 increase to the State pension in that period.

The document also commits to almost €1 billion in additional spending on childcare to bring monthly costs down to €200 per child and to provide 30,000 new places.

There is a commitment to build 300,000 homes over five years. In addition, Fine Gael says the Help-to-Buy Scheme would be extended until 2030 and increased to €40,000.

"I believe this five-year vision sets out a brighter future for our country, a more secure future in an uncertain world where the economy, your job, your livelihood, is protected," Mr Harris said.

"You can keep more of your own hard-earned money and worry less about the cost of accessing State services. We will get our young people out of box rooms in their parents' houses and into homes of their own." But opponents immediately

questioned the Fine Gael plan. Fianna Fáil Minister for Finance Jack Chambers said there was no provision for a new public sector pay deal in the document. Fine Gael said that the costs of any new public sector pay agreement would be included as part of the cost of maintaining existing level of service (ELS) – the additional costs of providing services each year.

But guidelines published by the Parliamentary Budget Office – which costs many policy proposals for politicians – say that the costs of pay deals are typically not included in ELS figures.

**Defended**  
Last night, Fine Gael's Pádraic Donohoe defended his party's costings. "The Fine Gael manifesto has set aside over €15 billion for the costs of our public services in the years ahead," he said.

"This will contain funding for any new pay agreement. It would not be wise to explicitly suggest the cost of a new agreement as the current agreement is in place until 2026, so negotiations are yet to begin."

Fianna Fáil also questioned whether the costs for additional health workers and gardaí were adequately provided for in the Fine Gael document.

Fine Gael's budgetary figures show that health spending is due to increase by about a billion euro every year, which the party insists will cover additional costs.

Sinn Féin spokesman on health David Cullinane said Fine Gael's manifesto for health "lacks new ideas or proper costings. The total funding that Fine Gael are committing for the health service would not even open all of the hospital beds which they are promising, never mind everything else."

The cost of 6,000 gardaí is put at just €61 million in the Fine Gael document, though parliamentary questions answered by Minister for Justice Helen McEntee puts the cost of just 1,000 extra gardaí at €47 million in a full year.

➔ General election 2024: pages 2-3



## High hopes Women candidates up 53%

Female general election candidates outside the Dáil yesterday. Women for Election says 248 women are running in the upcoming general election – the largest number to date – representing an increase of 53 per cent on the 2020 general election.

Photograph: Paul Sharp

## Ukraine clear to fire long-range US missiles at Russia

DANIEL McLAUGHLIN in Kyiv

The White House has given Ukraine permission to fire US-supplied long-range ballistic missiles at targets inside Russia for the first time, as Kyiv's forces in the Kursk border region battle Russian units supported by troops sent from North Korea.

US president Joe Biden approved Ukraine's use of Atacms missiles, which have a range of about 300km, two months before he leaves office and after resisting pressure on the issue

from Kyiv for much of 2024, US media outlets reported.

Mr Biden's administration repeatedly rejected Ukraine's requests to use Atacms inside Russia over fears that it could escalate Europe's biggest war since 1945, and amid repeated warnings from the Kremlin that granting Kyiv permission to use such long-range weapons would make western states direct parties to the conflict.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the request for clearance to strike military targets deeper inside Russia was one of the "main points" of

the so-called victory plan he presented to Mr Biden and other western leaders last month.

"Today, many in the media are saying we have received permission to take appropriate actions. But blows are not inflicted with words. Such things are not announced. The rockets will speak for themselves," he told the nation last night.

**Storm Shadow and Scalp**  
Britain and France are believed to favour allowing Kyiv to use the long-range cruise missiles that they supply – Storm Shadow and Scalp respectively –

against targets inside Russia, but only if the US gave approval on Atacms.

Kyiv will hope that Mr Biden's move prompts similar decisions from London and Paris and increases pressure on Germany to supply its Taurus long-range cruise missile.

Mr Biden's change of heart was triggered in part by the deployment of North Korean troops to Russia, according to the New York Times, which broke the story.

Ukrainian, US and South Korean intelligence agencies say that at least 10,000 North Korean

troops have been sent to Russia under a mutual defence pact signed recently, some of whom have clashed with Kyiv's forces in the Kursk region.

Unnamed US officials told the New York Times that Ukraine was likely to use Atacms to defend its troops against Russian and North Korean forces in Kursk, and that Mr Biden could also authorise strikes on other regions of Russia. Reuters quoted unnamed sources as saying Kyiv plans to carry out those first strikes in the coming days.

Kyiv has been frustrated that allies have been reluctant or slow to provide it with certain weapons, even as Russia has received attack drones from Iran from the start of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and is now being supplied with artillery shells, missiles and troops by Pyongyang.

It is not clear whether US president-elect Donald Trump will support or revoke Mr Biden's decision when he returns to the White House in January.

➔ Barrage of Russian missiles damages power grid and kills seven in Ukraine: page 6

## Gardaí urge vigilance over rise in counterfeit currency

ALEKSON LACERDA

There has been a significant increase in reports to An Garda Síochána of counterfeit currency in circulation.

New figures indicate more than 700 incidents have been reported to gardaí between January and October 2024 compared to about 130 in the same period last year.

The most common denominations of counterfeit banknotes detected are €50 notes followed by €20, said a Garda spokesman.

Businesses and their staff have been urged to be vigilant. "Business owners should be particularly mindful if someone is attempting to pay for an expensive item with a large note in an attempt to get a large sum of change in real money," said gardaí.

"Organised crime plays a significant

role in the production and distribution of counterfeit currency. An Garda Síochána continues to liaise with other law enforcement agencies ... to disrupt the distribution of counterfeit currency via postal services around Europe. This operation is aimed at enhancing security and combating organised crime," they added.

**'Trend'**  
Businesses in Moore Street, Dublin said they had seen increasing evidence of fake notes in circulation. "It's a trend now – in the last couple of months we've witnessed a lot of people trying to pass it around," said street vendor Caroline Alwright.

The Irish Times spoke to workers and owners at 25 shops, cafes, markets and pubs in central Dublin and only four said they had not come across anyone attempting to pay with

forged notes over the past six months.

A Central Bank of Ireland spokesman said, however, there are many security features incorporated into euro banknotes.

"The central bank reports figures as part of the wider Eurosystem. The ECB Annual Report 2023 reported that across the Eurosystem in 2023, 16 counterfeit banknotes were detected per million genuine banknotes in circulation. Despite this very small proportion, the number of counterfeit banknotes increased compared with 2022, when the number of counterfeits was exceptionally low following the Covid-19 pandemic. There is little likelihood of receiving a counterfeit."

➔ More counterfeit money being passed off in shops and on streets, say retailers: page 5

## Weather

Mostly cloudy with rain across the south and west, becoming widespread in the afternoon. Highs of 3-11 degrees.

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## Home News

**High Court: Tech giant X is challenging new online safety rules put in place for video-sharing platforms: page 4**

**Dublin City Council: plans to turn the State's last Magdalene laundry into a national memorial and research centre are now before the council: page 5**

## World News



**Middle East: Hizbullah's media relations chief Mohammad Afif was killed yesterday in an Israeli air strike on a central Beirut: page 6**

## Business Today

**Dublin Airport: A former security staff member has concerns about how airport operator DAA would handle a whistleblower highlighting safety issues: page 12**

**Energy: Wind delivered about one-third of Ireland's electricity needs over the last 10 months: page 12**

## Sports Monday

**Golf: Rory McIlroy won the DP World Tour Championship in Dubai by two strokes and in the process topped the season-long order of merit**

**Rugby: Leicester Tigers and Montpellier are believed to be in the running to sign Leinster out-half Ross Byrne**

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